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Afterthoughts on the Pittsburgh Meeting

A Symposium

I.—ARTHUR W. MASON.

Columbus, Ohio.

In retrospect the conference of 1915 grows larger and fuller of meaning than any previous meeting. There are great changes taking place in all lines of endeavor and we find great unrest in the musical world, in school music, perhaps most of all. Being so closely correlated with the other educational work of the schools, it is constantly changing in order to conform to the changing methods and growth in other educational lines. Consequently it is at present the liveliest of the musical activities. The membership of the conference is composed of the leading supervisors of music of the entire country, and therefore this organization is at the front in all the latest development. This fact alone serves to make it the most virile musical organization in the land. Its membership numerically is very strong, approaching the 500 mark, and it draws upon all sections of the United States for the names on its roll of members, a fact that keeps it from narrowing into any one set of ideas. It is particularly free from cliques and its friendships seem to be very general. The members meet upon a common ground where all have a hearing; discussions both in and out of the meetings are very free, and the interchange of ideas is invaluable. As the remarkable advantages of such an association become better known and appreciated, supervisors will find it an invaluable aid and inspiration to them, and will make all their ar-

rangements with the view of attending the annual meetings. The meeting at Lincoln, Neb., in 1916 should surpass all others in interest and attendance. The program will be of undoubted value, the social features of the chorus, the renewal of old friendships and the forming of new ones, and the discussions of matters pertaining to the school work will give an experience to carry back to the field of each one that could not be obtained elsewhere.

II.—WILL EARHART, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Owing to a slip in the forwarding of my mail, Mr. Dykema's request for a review from me of the Pittsburgh meetings of the Supervisors' Conference reaches me almost as the Journal goes to press. A summary of impressions and a statement of the residuum of opinion that has subconsciously crystallized since the meetings must consequently form the matter of this writing.

The energy, almost ebullient, of the meetings, impressed me powerfully. No one could come in contact with the members, in formal meetings or in their informal gatherings about the hotel, without feeling the urge of this optimistic, eager vitality of mood. There was nothing of the perfunctory, no trace of an inclination to conduct the meetings in the dull spirit of routine. My judgment is that this motivation, which reached almost inspirational heights at times, came from a clear recognition of the breadth of the

field of work that the supervisor of music has gradually come to inherit. Only a few years ago our survey of our province in these very meetings, comprehended only what may be found within the four walls of a schoolroom—"vocal music," sight-singing. Now it includes, further, elaborate high school courses in harmony and musical appreciation, orchestras in the schools, definite relation of the work of all the professional musicians outside the school, with a view to crediting in school the results of their teaching, the encouragement and supervision of choruses, orchestras and classes for study among the adults of the community, in evening schools and community center work, the organization of violin classes, the conducting of school and community music festivals—in a word the entire field of popular musical activity and effort in a community. With all this we are forming well defined connections, to it all we bear important and clearly recognized relations. So rich a world have we come to inherit! Is it any wonder that every ounce of energy in the supervisor leaps to the call, that every impulse within him urges him to prepare himself to meet the opportunity worthily?

In the face of such a large responsibility narrowness and self-aggrandizement disappear. No one can do it all, no one can dispense with the experience and help of others. Perhaps I did not catch the true spirit of the meeting, but it seemed to me that, without heroics, without any disposition to hug ourselves egotistically, we more than once in these meetings dimly felt ourselves to be a band of apostles, with a gospel com-

mitted to our care, the propagation of which rested upon our shoulders; and everybody was most welcome to join us.

In providing concrete, practical help the meetings were not for a moment ineffective. We have now met often enough to have freed ourselves from all tendency toward mere academic discussion. Because we have met and have had much debate, have made careful investigations, and formulated various conclusions, we have arrived at a clear comprehension of our work and a sufficient amount of agreement as to essentials of method and practice—so far at least as our membership is concerned—to enable us to proceed amicably and with sure steps toward improvement in efficiency.

We are agreed as to the tasks to be accomplished and, in general, the machinery proper for their accomplishment. Our successful engineers may now tell us of their various methods of procedure in bringing the machinery to a high point of accomplishment; and from each of these recitals we learn something of value.

One is tempted to enlarge upon the social aspect of the gatherings; but the spirit described above gives sufficient indication of the admirable nature of this. I should like, too, to speak of what the meetings meant to us of the Department of Music in the public schools of Pittsburgh; but that I said before the meeting at the time, and there is no opportunity and no reason for repeating it here. The contributions made by many individuals, organizations and institutions to our pleasure while here still call forth from me a warm feeling of gratitude; and

we of the local department have not forgotten the breadth of view with which our own work was met and regarded. But a detailed review of the programs and meetings is impossible here and when so much remains to be said an early stopping-place is as good as a later. One large value only which came in evidence again at these meetings, must be mentioned in closing, to encourage us and inspire us. This was the address of Dr. Claxton, with its revelation of profound understanding of the essential values of our art and its assurance of co-operation with us in every worthy endeavor we may make.

With such assurance, every encouraging condition that we could ask seems to be granted us. What will we do with the opportunity? It is hoped that our next meeting, in Lincoln, Nebraska, may give no weak and uncertain answer to that question.

III.—C. H. MILLER, Lincoln, Neb.

All professions and vocations now have their conventions. Those who attend them are the people who want the newest and best ideas for their work. The last meeting at Pittsburgh indicates a rapidly growing interest in music.

The first music taught in the public schools of America was in Boston in 1832—83 years ago. Since the National Conference was organized in 1907, more progress has been made in extending the influence of music and improving the methods of teaching it than in all the preceding years.

It is the policy of our organization, to meet in widely divergent sec-

tions so as to bring the meetings within easy reach of all supervisors once in three or four years.

The supervisors who have been leaders in doing certain important things are placed on the program to outline and demonstrate their ideas. The convention not only discusses the supervisor's vital problems, but gives an opportunity to mingle with people of strong personality, and to imbibe some of their enthusiasm. One of the strongest factors in past meetings was the opportunity of seeing certain features of our regular work demonstrated in helpful ways. At Pittsburgh the development of the orchestra and community music was one of the greatest attractions.

The music supervisor in a town of 50,000 or less population is lonely professionally, because he is the only one of his profession in the city. He very rarely gets an opportunity to exchange ideas with one of his kind, or to see a fellow supervisor at work. In consequence, he is likely to become somewhat narrow, provincial, and dogmatic in his ideas and methods.

Our national meeting provides the opportunity to observe, for a whole week, all lines of work, both prepared and unprepared. We see, fully worked out, plans that are very different from our own, or maybe our own plans developed more effectively. The results of the work shown in classes and in concerts give us new and higher ideals and inspirations.

Many of us do not have the respect for our subject that it deserves. The reason is largely from the lack of associating with our fellow-supervisors. When we stand alone as the chief exponent of music in our own

city, the more timid are led to believe that maybe our work is not so important after all. This condition is very menacing at this time, when so many junior high schools are depreciating music to make room for other subjects. All arguments favor attending our own conventions.

IV.—OSBOURNE McCONATHY, Evanston, Ill.

Of all the advantages that attendance on the meetings of the Music Supervisors' National Conference brings, I count as greatest the opportunity it gives for meeting and exchanging views with my fellow workers. Many of the men and women who are doing real service in building our nation into a music loving people are present at these gatherings. It is significant to note that those who have accomplished the most are the readiest to give freely of their knowledge and experience. I return home from these meetings not only with a wealth of new ideas gathered from my pleasant discussions both on and off the floor, not only with a host of dear friendships renewed and strengthened and new friendships gained, not only with the inspiration to attack with vigorous courage the problems of my daily task, but with a conviction deeper and stronger than ever that our work is worth while, that it is a vital force that is making of us a nation better fitted to faithfully bear our burden and do our part in the uplift of humanity in these war troubled times and in the brighter days to come.

V.—HENRIETTA BAKER LOW, New York City and Baltimore.

There are at least two times in the

year when a Supervisor of Music feels that life is eminently worth while and that the Music Department is the biggest factor in school and community development. He glows with enthusiasm, after a summer vacation in the open (we hope he's been out-doors anyway!) and "he rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race" when he gets back after the week of the National Conference of Music Supervisors. The Conference week gives him enthusiasm plus knowledge in his immediate field, for it must be an unusually unobservant person who sees *no* phase of the subject better done than *he* could do it!

The Conference in Pittsburgh lacked no whit of this vitalizing power and in one thing it was unique. I refer to the immense field which Mr. Earhart had staked off as the "School Music" field, people's choruses, people's orchestras, grade teaching of instruments, high school harmony and ear training classes—high school orchestras—a reference to the music activities of Pittsburgh under the control of Mr. Earhart, makes us long to applaud the man who *claims* a big field and the enlightened policy of a board of education that admits the claim. There must be a pocket-book somewhere in Pittsburgh sanctified to social improvement; let us rejoice that the board of education has access to it. Who knows? Maybe the thing we ought to take away from Pittsburgh is the realization that we ought to educate *our* boards to a like liberality in the music department!

I pass from the practical demonstration of school work to the Conference at the Schenley. Here, at the meetings, one heard every phase of the work given a hearing, and gen-

eral educators too (not musicians) brought their contribution of thought provoking matter. Everywhere one was impressed with the open minded spirit prevailing.

At breakfast and luncheon, little groups of people could be seen enjoying the comradeship that the meetings provide.

At dinner all assembled in a special dining room and the hearty and general singing under Mr. Dykema was an evidence of the good-fellowship prevailing.

And there was beauty in Pittsburgh—that breath of life to the tired worker. The Schenley was attractive, the outlook charming, the public buildings in which some of the meetings were held were lessons in architecture and lighting; the Carnegie School of Art and Design added its quota of artistry. (I could only get a peep through a door—the crowd was so great—but I had my “thrill” for eye and ear with the opening of the door.) And the children and their pure tonal beauty and the charming, unforced, easy manner of teachers and pupils whenever they came under observation! There was an ethical beauty in the Pittsburgh Music Department that was one of the most striking things there.

Travel, new scenes, interesting and stimulating people, a broader finer vision, comradeship and the re-creation for the pursuance of one's work,—all these came through the Pittsburgh meeting.

VI.—G. E. KNAPP,

Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

My impressions of the Pittsburgh meeting must be from the standpoint of one new in the Public School

Music field and cannot in any way be criticisms of the programs. I first attended the Conference at Minneapolis and returned to my work in a small denominational academy with more ambition to better prepare myself in this work. The inspiration of hearing and seeing what the “big people” were saying and doing led me to use every possible opportunity to add to my training. As a result of taking special work the following summer my work conveniently changed in locality so that I could go to Pittsburgh. Here my added experience enabled me to take a more intelligent interest in the different sessions. I met many whose acquaintance I had made at Minneapolis, visited with friends I might not otherwise have seen for some time, felt the enthusiasm of the “get-together” spirit and had a great time.

I found that the meeting as a whole gave me a broad, inspiring idea of what was being done, and the ways in which things were done by our foremost supervisors. I had a selfish desire to get all the useful information I could, which is one of the things we meet for. One matter which comes to mind is that of our attitudes toward the work we see in the schools of the cities we visit. It seems to me that these demonstrations of every day methods are not to be considered as model exhibitions to be scrutinized microscopically, so to speak, and figuratively torn to tatters afterward. This super-critical attitude is but little in evidence with us.

The concerts and entertainments given in our honor were exceptionally good and were of the greatest enjoyment and profit to me.

I have been told that in previous sessions the Normal School work

came in for more attention. I would appreciate a session devoted to that subject.

VII.—ELIZABETH CASTERTON.
Rochester, N. Y.

Pittsburgh has been, during the past year, the meeting place of two National Musical Conventions, the Music Teachers' National Association and the National Conference of Music Supervisors. It has been a valuable experience to me to have attended both of these apparently similar, yet dissimilar meetings, the first in December as a delegate of the Conference, the second in March as a delegate of my Board of Education.

The Music Teachers' National Association is characterized as an association of musicians extremely individual in type. Its members are men and women who are expert teachers, composers, harmonists and so forth, developed each in his own laboratory, so to speak, many of national reputation but practically all lacking contact with the great pulsating world that the Music Supervisor knows so well. Yet they have been impressed by a feeling of community interest and community spirit and are more or less cognizant of the great opportunities, as well as the great difficulties, of public school music. I believe they are ready to contribute to the musical development of the community as a whole and to assist the music supervisor in the musical training of the young people under her charge. Only I feel that they do not know what to contribute, nor when, nor how.

In order to secure their further interest and their co-operation it has occurred to me that it might be possible, in the near future, to arrange

a joint meeting of the Conference with the M. T. N. A. Such a joint meeting would give to the Supervisors, in addition to their own sessions, the privileges of contact with the members of the M. T. N. A., of hearing their addresses and discussions—the benefits of two conventions at the expense of one.

The March meeting of the National Conference of Music Supervisors was indeed a memorable one. As usual one of the most helpful parts of the program was the demonstrations of the regular class work under the capable leadership of Mr. Earhart and his assistants. One was much impressed by the high standard of the work seen, work which is built upon truly splendid and broad lines.

One noticeable fact in regard to the meeting was the large number of young supervisors and teachers of music in attendance. Many of these could not boast the oft heard "twenty-five years experience" but could tell of great things accomplished, greater perhaps than others have yet dreamed possible. Some have had as many great inspirations and carried them into effect in their limited experience as others with more years in the service of public school music. Personally I have much faith in this host of enthusiastic young workers and believe them to be furnishing much of the life and the inspiration of public school music.

Lincoln, Nebraska is chosen as the next meeting place. There will be much of interest to be seen and heard there for both the city of Lincoln and the state of Nebraska have made wonderful strides in music. Our Conference has been most wise in its policy of placing its meetings in dif-

ferent sections of the country and of convening in cities large enough to allow opportunities for the illustration of different varieties of work by the several special teachers or supervisors of music employed therein. Eight states have been favored by its conventions in the eight years of its organization. It is to be hoped that it will continue its policy of convening in various sections and that there will be presented at the Lincoln meeting many invitations from large cities not yet visited.

VIII.—W. P. KENT, New York City

It is hard for music-lovers to believe that any one's life can be even reasonably complete without participation in music of some kind; still, we are forced to admit that some of our pupils are indifferent toward any music worthy of the name, while others positively dislike to take any part in the production of music, and that the number of these increases in the upper grades, when the pupils have been longer under our influence! To those of us who believe that to love songs is a finer thing than to be able to read at sight, and that technical knowledge does not necessarily create a love for the subject matter, the meeting of last March was a great inspiration.

IX.—HARPER C. MAYBEE
Kalamazoo, Mich.

The Conference of Music Supervisors at Pittsburgh last spring was a most noteworthy assemblage of men and women interested in the educational side of music. Pittsburgh teachers, musicians, and citizens were most cordial and furnished many attractions which were artistic as well as inspirational in char-

acter. Music publishers exhibited recent publications which were freely used both in the regular meetings and at the evening banquets. The most lasting impression was the meeting in an informal way fellow workers from various educational institutions and music centers and getting in close touch with their highest ideals in the great movement of raising musical standards in our commonwealth.

X.—C. H. FARNSWORTH,
New York City.
A Suggestion.

Those who attended the Pittsburg meeting of the Supervisors' Conference were no doubt impressed by the growth of the organization. It would be an inspiration to any teacher to see both the numbers and quality of those who were gathered to further the cause of school music.

At the same time with this growth, it seemed to me a change was coming over the character of the meeting. I feel the necessity of making a choice as to the offerings of interesting subjects that I should attend to. I could not keep in touch with the whole meeting in the same way that I could in the earlier gatherings. Thus the very success of the Conference was changing its character, making it perhaps less informal and personally interesting. That such change must come with the growth of any successful organization is inevitable.

The suggestion that I would like to make is one that in a measure makes up for what is lost in interest through the growth of the organization. It is that we take up seriously the question of a permanent editor who should be paid sufficiently to make him put in the necessary time

and clerical help to gather all the material that is offered at these conferences as well as perhaps valuable papers and investigations that the limit of the program might make it impossible to have presented, and to publish them in such form or forms that while those who attend the meetings may not be able to hear all that is given, they will have the material completely presented to them for careful consideration.

It would seem not too much to claim that there is no professional work where so many new problems are being presented due both to the demands of the communities and to the increase of resources through inventive and commercial enterprises as is presented to the music supervisor. To focus all that is being done so that the members of the conference may have the benefit of what is being accomplished on what one might call the firing line of the profession, means a rare combination of literary ability, artistic and professional insight and willingness and enthusiasm for hard work. It would be difficult to find such a person, and when found, it would be cruel and unjust to demand the work without some small compensation. The society is large enough and could well afford to increase its membership fee, if necessary, to make an appropriation say of at least \$400, for paying the services of a literary editor. Few realize how much time and effort it takes to prepare an address to be as effective on the printed page as it was when spoken. It is hoped that the next Conference will take up this question seriously and not only appropriate the funds necessary, but appoint the man to carry it on; such an appointment when the right per-

son is found, being looked upon as a permanent one for a series of years, in order that the continuity in the form of publications can be established. It will be of the greatest importance that the first man who will have to establish precedents, shall be adequate to his position.

XI.—EDGAR B. GORDON,
Winfield, Kansas.

In reply to your request for some impressions made on me by the spring meeting in Pittsburgh, will say that it is almost impossible for me to single out any particular things for comment because of the fact that every session contained features so distinctive. I presume, however, that the thing which stood out most prominently to me was the very widespread interest among all in the social uses of music or in other words, Community Music. It is surely a precursor of a better day—a day when music shall be a much more vital thing in the life of all the people; that a representative body of Public Schools Music Supervisors from all parts of the country, shall make an important subject of their deliberations, the discussion of ways and means of carrying the influence of music into every strata of life and of using it as a means for social service. Certainly this new and broader view point of music education will do much to dignify the art in the eyes of the layman and give to the professional musician a new vision and objective in life.

XII.—CHARLES N. BOYD,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Teaching and other engagements for ten or twelve hours a day while the Music Supervisors were meeting

here prevented my attendance at most of the sessions. But I did hear some good words in the way of after-math, and if these notes are of any use for your Bulletin I shall be pleased.

Three Impressions.

Coming into the Schenley about seven-thirty one evening I met a friend, not a particularly musical person, who had just been gazing into the room where the assembled supervisors had feasted and sung. My friend said: "Say! what a good time those people are having, and how they do sing! Teachers who can enjoy themselves that way must certainly be able to teach well."

Another friend was in a train in the South-west, and heard two men in the seat behind him talking over the Pittsburgh meeting. They heartily agreed that the long journey was amply justified by the results, particularly the inspiration received from association with teachers who were active, enthusiastic and progressive.

One of the local teachers said: "The visit of the supervisors to our school did more in a day than I could do for the standing of the music department in months. Everybody, from the smallest pupil to the Principal, was impressed with the visitors and their radiant enthusiasm, and their coming was a blessing to this school."

XIII.—KARL W. GEHRKENS, Oberlin, Ohio.

Out of the multiplicity of impressions made upon me by our recent meeting in Pittsburgh two loom up higher than all the rest, and as I think back over the events of the Conference it seems to me that these two things were really the dominant

notes (ought I say tones?) of the entire meeting. First of all I was struck by the feeling of good fellowship which was so prevalent that it seemed to permeate and envelope everybody—officers and members and hosts. Even the representatives of notoriously antagonistic book-publishing houses appeared to feel its influence occasionally and could now and again be seen chatting to each other in apparently friendly fashion. Let me remark just here that this feeling of comradeship was directly fostered by and probably largely the direct result of the singing together which we all enjoyed so much, thus offering yet one further proof of the communizing and fraternizing influence of music. (Mr. Dykema please notice and give me a long credit mark!)

The other thing that impressed me deeply was the very evident spirit of eagerness for new knowledge—a searching after more light, which was manifest among the rank and file of the Conference membership. There are a few in the Association who do not seem to change in any way from meeting to meeting but go on year after year thinking and saying and doing just the same things; but the majority of the members seem to be intensely active in their search for better methods and broader viewpoints. If this was not apparent in the open discussions it was certainly very much in evidence in the chatting and arguing that could be heard going on at any time of either day or night.

Surely these two characteristics—if they be indeed the dominant ones of the Conference—are healthy signs and augur well for the future of school music in America. Good fel-

lowship and an eager searching for more light: what two qualities could be more desirable for an association of teachers!

XIV.—THEO. WINKLER,
Sheboygan, Wis.

What an attendance there was!—our three hundred men and women, most of whom came at great personal expense, a certain proof that our conference must be worth while. Probably the day will soon come, when we will be treated as liberally by our communities as the fire and police chiefs and our expenses to these conventions paid. The spirit shown throughout the conference, the meetings and discussions, was one of utmost good nature, of fellowship. And how could it be otherwise, when the foundation of our entire work lies in harmony?

Of course there were differences of opinion, and rightly so. The old controversy of song singing versus sight reading was again discussed and probably will be to the end of time, although a happy solution was offered by one of the supervisors advising us to teach sight reading by reading beautiful songs. Nobody could have attended that conference without becoming fully imbued with the importance of music teaching in the schools, as several speakers, among them the Commissioner of Education, Dr. Philander P. Claxton, told us in a convincing and inspiring way, that music is second to no other branch in the school curriculum.

Another fact brought out at these meetings was the advance of instrumental music in the schools. New York and other cities have taken the initiative in providing instrumental instruction, under the supervision of

the director of music, and the movement is sure to grow. The high schools also are making greater demands on us and music courses are being introduced in many of these schools throughout the land.

We certainly enjoyed our visits to the schools, which were excellently planned, and the teachers, who instructed before our critical eyes, certainly are to be complimented on their success. It is no small matter to have a crowd of visitors, sometimes from fifty to one hundred, literally take possession of your room and fill it so completely, that in one instance at least the teacher was obliged to search for his harmony class among our numbers.

The work in the schools showed up to good advantage, especially in the tone work and singing. The sight-reading may be inferior to that done in other cities. The evening entertainments were delightful and a credit to Mr. Will Earhart, our host, and his corps of able assistants.

And then our own singing! I doubt whether any body of people ever sang with such enthusiasm, such abandon, such thorough enjoyment. Under the inspiring, magnetic leadership of Prof. Dykema and his successors we certainly did beautifully, and the singing hour was one of the most enjoyable features of the day's program. Do you remember the "Winter Song" sung by the men? And, though I say it myself, how well we handled that new song at sight, given to us to prove our mettle before those high school students! Surely, as one of the colleagues remarked, we could then and there, with little preparation, have given an entertainment worthy of the best audience of Pittsburgh.